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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA835, NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS REGIONAL REPORTING: MATAGALPA

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA835**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA835	2006-04-17 18:38	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-discrecion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000835

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: ELECTIONS REPORTING
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#)
SUBJECT: NICARAGUAN ELECTIONS REGIONAL REPORTING: MATAGALPA

Classified By: PAUL A. TRIVELLI. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On March 30, Property Officer and LES Lawyer visited Matagalpa, capital of the northeastern Nicaraguan Department of Matagalpa, to discuss upcoming national elections with local business, political and civil society leaders and to gauge their views on the prospect of free and fair elections in November. Respondents predicted that the pace of voter registration irregularities will escalate in the months to come. END SUMMARY.

2, (SBU) Interviewees: Diana Urbina of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC); Norman Le Clair of the Friends of Alvarado Movement (AA); Carlos Javier Mejia of the American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) and Esperanza Coffee Group; Mercedes Fley of the Ethics and Transparency group (ET); Jose Gonzalez Picado of the Herty 2006 Movement (HERTY); and Luis Fonseca and Enrique Matamoros of the Liberal Nicaraguan Alliance/Conservative Party (ALN/PC).

ELECTORAL COUNCILS SELECTIVE IN ISSUING CEDULAS

¶3. (SBU) According to our interlocutors, delays and glitches in obtaining national IDs (cedulas) required for voter registration plague non-Sandinista Matagalpinos trying to register to vote. At the same time, stories abound of "expedited" "one-stop shopping" service for known or prospective pro-Sandinista sympathizers in Matagalpa. While the legal voting age is 16, contacts claimed that underage and/or disaffected teenagers are being cynically manipulated by FSLN militants via falsified birth certificates and dreams of future patronage. (Comment: Similar changes were common in the Atlantic Coast prior to the March 5 elections, however, little hard evidence was uncovered by electoral missions. End comment.)

¶4. (SBU) Interviewees were unified in their disrespect for Matagalpa representatives in the National Assembly, regardless of party affiliation. They accused the deputies of virtually abandoning local constituents after election to office in order to bask in the relative luxury of the capital. Meanwhile, schools, clinics and the huge potholes on the bumpy road to Matagalpa fall into greater disrepair, and children scrape dirt off roadsides to fill potholes instead of begging outright.

PLC SUPPORT FOR QUINONEZ OR RIZO?

¶5. (SBU) The local PLC party president and current National Assembly deputy hopeful, Diana Urbina, stated that presidential pre-candidates Quinonez and Rizo were the front-runners in the race for her party's upcoming selection, but that Rizo is "soft" and "susceptible to arm-twisting by

ex-President Aleman". Assessing coffee planter and cattle owner preferences, she indicated Quinonez as the department favorite because of his experience, loyalty to the region, and anti-FSLN stance during the Sandinista regime. (Comment: In fact, Rizo came out well ahead of Quinonez, with 30 votes versus 16 in the PLC Department Convention process. End comment.) A defaced poster of President Bolanos, contrasted with untouched photos lauding ex-Presidents Anastasio Somoza, Arnaldo Aleman and other party regulars, was prominently featured in the PLC office.

AMBASSADORIAL STATEMENTS

¶16. (SBU) When queried about Matagalpinos' impressions of the U.S. Embassy and the statements of Ambassador Trivelli, Ms. Urbina considered the Ambassador's observations acceptable, but not the tone. Specifically, she objected to the word "delinquent" when used to characterize ex-President Aleman, noting that Aleman's "El Chile" residence is practically a pilgrimage site. President of the Amigos de Alvarado (AA) organization, Norman Le Clair, viewed the Ambassador's statements as sincere, on target and preferable to usual diplomatic platitudes. The Montealegre and Herty camps expressed positive feelings toward United States and the Ambassador.

TECHNOCRATS, BANKERS, POPULISTS

¶17. (SBU) Regarding Nicaraguan political actors, interviewees viewed President Bolanos as a respected futurist or technocrat with laudable intentions, but faulted his scant populist skills. Liberal candidate Eduardo Montealegre was taken very seriously by our interlocutors, despite some concern regarding his financial sector ties. Since many Matagalpa coffee producers suffered property foreclosures in the past, they are wary of the banking industry in general. Sandinista candidate Herty Lewites is considered an improvement over FSLN leader Daniel Ortega, but not a serious frontrunner for the presidency.

¶18. (SBU) The last two mayors of the city of Matagalpa have been Sandinistas and the FSLN is considered well positioned to influence November elections. Fearing yet another FSLN victory, our interlocutors warned that the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) was poised to overlook fraudulent registration and other irregular voting shenanigans that could lead to a new caudillo administration unless opposition is galvanized more effectively. The Vamos Con Eduardo (Montealegre supporters) (VCE) group is particularly apprehensive that skittish voters will hold their noses and vote for the PLC, rather than risk an Ortega victory.

MONTEALEGRE-LEWITES: A DREAM TEAM?

¶19. (SBU) Herty Lewites campaign manager Jose Gonzalez suggested a dream team consisting of Montealegre for president with Herty as vice president. (Comment: We've heard this match before, as well as the comment that it's an unrealistic and unnatural alliance, especially for rural voters to accept. End comment.) Gonzalez firmly dismissed the notion that Herty could be a stalking horse for Daniel Ortega, as alleged by Liberal contacts.

COMMENT:

¶10. (SBU) There is palpable fear among Matagalpa's voters that the country's fragile democracy is at risk and that reprisals are always possible. Although frontrunners, candidates Lewites and Montealegre must convince voters that they have built party machines sufficient to defend their positions against the predatory and fraudulent tactics of the traditional parties. Our Matagalpino interlocutors reason that if illegal issuance of voter identification cards has

been impossible to halt until now, what irregularities will the Supreme Electoral Council not condemn next? Non-FSLN parties have no trouble spinning nightmare scenarios of a political juggernaut strong-arming its way to victory in November and will continue to seek U.S. encouragement, if not our outright seal of approval, of their respective candidates.

TRIVELLI